



the Circle

volume thirty two, issue two — spring two thousand six

Editor's Letter

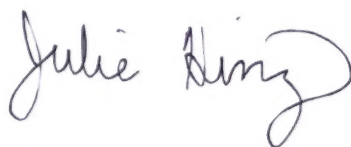
I'm a lucky girl. I'm lucky that I've had the opportunity to spend four years here on the rolling plains of Dixie. I'm lucky that I got to experience Auburn's 150th birthday during my tenure here as a student. And, I'm especially lucky that I have had the chance to serve as editor of the Auburn Circle and to have been able to help it continue to grow as a reflection of the creative voice of Auburn University.

Of course, many people played a part in my fortune, and I couldn't allow this issue of the Circle to be printed without thanking them. First, Dafni Greene and Lisa Lee. Without their unwavering support and help with the everyday trials of running the Circle, we'd never make it to print. Second, my professors. Their compliments and eager reception of the Circle give the staff something to work for. Next, my friends. Whether it was help with distribution, promotion, or just with tedious office work, they were always willing to help when I asked. And, finally, I'd like to thank each and every one of the students, alumni, and staff that had the courage to send in their work.

This year, we were amazed by the response to our call for submissions. Since the fall issue, the volume of submissions that we receive has more than tripled. It has been mind blowing to come into the office each day to find multiple new submissions. This issue of the Circle marks the first issue in the six that I have been a part of that we did not need to extend the deadline for submissions. That being said, it was extremely hard to choose among all the high-quality submissions that we received this semester. Many great submissions had to be turned down because we just don't have the space to fit them all in. But, in the end, we feel that what we are presenting in this issue reflects the best of the best of Auburn University more so than any issue before.

This magazine that you hold in your hand contains the voices that will be around forever, reminding us what it was like to be an Auburn student in 2006. I hope that you feel as lucky as I do to get to experience this amazing display of the artistic vision of Auburn University.

War Eagle!



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Editor in Chief, 2005-2006

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About the Circle

The Auburn Circle is one of ten Student Activity Projects annually receiving student activity fee allocations and coordinated through the Office of the Dean of Students, a Division of Student Affairs.

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Acknowledgements

Special thanks to the Auburn University faculty and staff for your support of *The Auburn Circle*

Dr. Kent Smith, *Dean of Students*

Wendi Santee, *Coordinator of Student Development Programs and Judicial Affairs*

Dafni Greene, *Advisor, Student Publications*

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Submissions

Submissions featured in *The Auburn Circle* are accepted from students, alumni, faculty, and staff of Auburn University. Submissions include fiction, nonfiction, poetry, art, photography, and design. Editors review all submissions to select articles and artwork of appropriate size and content for printing. Reasonable care is taken to represent the article or artwork in the form it was intended. Editors proof all submissions for accuracy before they are printed. Photos and artwork are chosen and placed with an article based on theme and design style at the discretion of the editors.

Auburn University is not responsible for determining the original authorship or ownership of any submissions. Persons presenting submissions for the publication must sign a form stating that the work submitted is their original work. Auburn University, its Board of Trustees, faculty, and staff are not responsible for any liability, including but not limited to, authorship, ownership, misprinting, etc., of any submissions published in *The Auburn Circle*.

The opinions of the authors and artists published in this magazine are not meant to represent Auburn University, *The Auburn Circle*, or our advertisers in any way.

How To Submit

For art, design, photography

- As a hard copy or original art piece. We will digitally photograph your work(s) for you.
- On a CD or other electronic storage device as a high resolution .JPEG, .TIF, or .AI format image file. All images must be 150 dpi resolution or greater due to printing resolution. Any photo submission less than 150 dpi will not be used.
- As a slide or negative
- As a photograph of the art or design.

For literature

- As an Adobe Acrobat Document (.PDF) or Microsoft Word Document (.DOC) file
- As an original hard copy version

Where to Submit

You can submit your submissions either electronically via email to acircle@auburn.edu or in person to the Circle office.

Additional Info

Please label all entries with name, title, phone number, and email address. You will also be required to turn in a submission waiver with each entry.

Notice to Artists & Photographers

Image size and resolution are important to preserve the quality within the *Auburn Circle*. We prefer image sizes to be as large as possible and image quality to be 150 dots per inch (dpi) or greater. Any image that does not meet our quality standards will not be used. If you aren't sure how to do this, please contact us so we can help.

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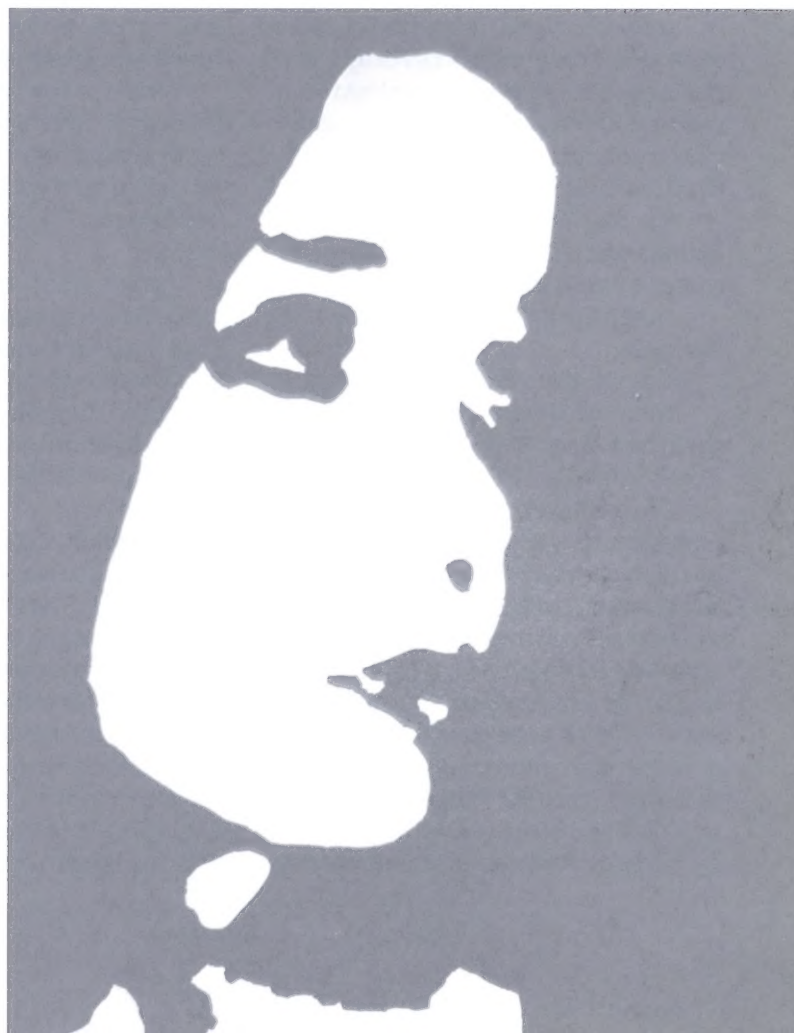
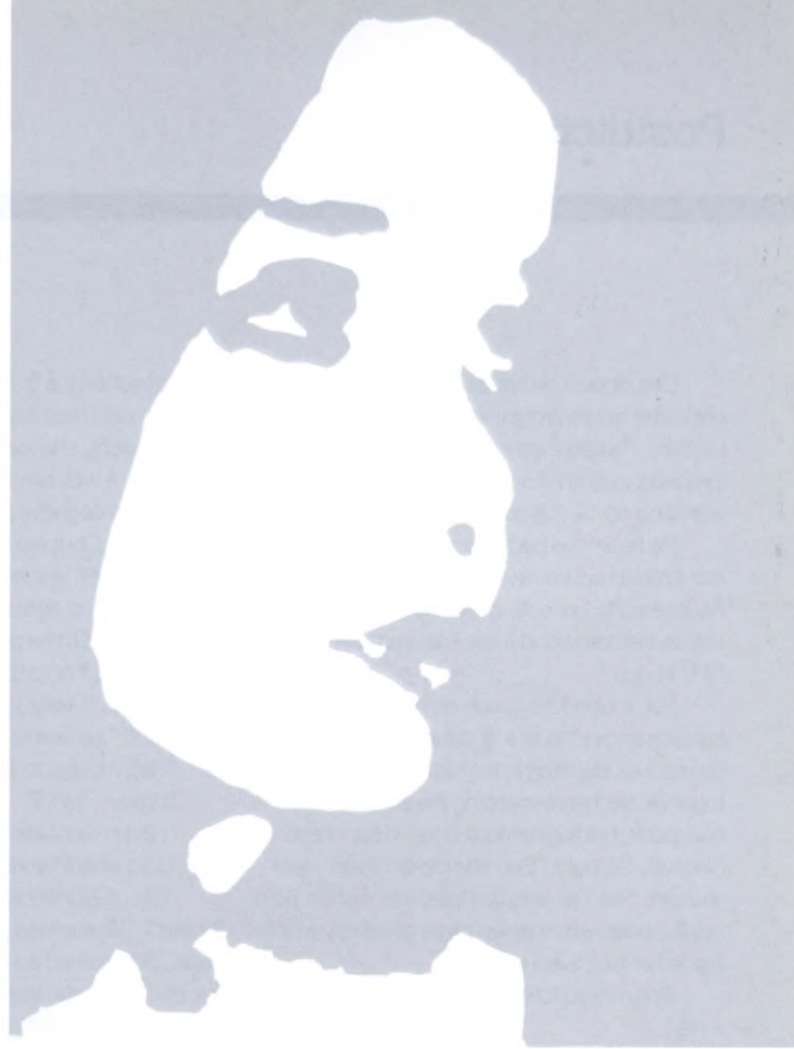
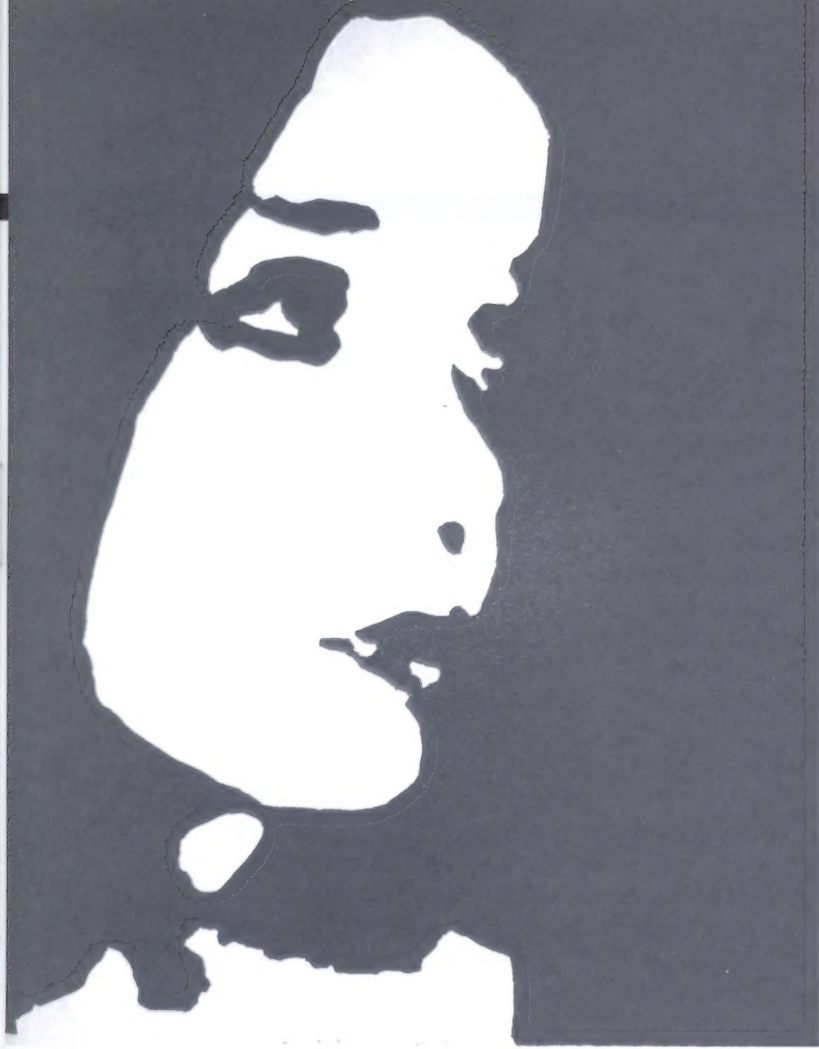
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I revise fantasies like worn-out term papers
reworked for new assignments.
I cut or copy a face, a gesture,
and place it elsewhere,
Pasting it awkwardly
into an ill-transitioned phrase of consciousness.
It passes for dreaming.



Ben dipped his hands into the sink full of dishwater, and a brown, swirling film spread from his skin. He splashed water onto his neck and forehead, pulling back at his hairline, running a wet hand across his scalp.

He heard the back door open and knew that Emma had come. It was five after three. He listened to her soft, careful footsteps moving across the hardwood floor. He heard her say, "You're dirty."

Ben rubbed his hands on the white towel hanging above the sink and turned to face her. Emma was standing in the kitchen doorway, feet together, her hands clasping the straps of her backpack, holding her fists close to her chest. She was 19, but to Ben she looked three years younger. Her hair was gathered into a short ponytail, bound with a green piece of ribbon, which made her look even younger.

Ben moved toward her. "I was changing a tire."

"Yours?"

"A friend's. A girl's. Jealous?" She squinted at him and drew her lips together tight, that playful look she fired when he referenced sex or joked about her age. He studied the dimples in her cheeks and the freckles on her nose. "I heard David was in town."

"He was. Yesterday. I ate lunch with him." Ben held her eyes as she slid a step closer and smiled up into his face. "Jealous?"

"Yes. Maybe. That depends. Does he still hate me?"

"I don't know. We didn't talk about you."

"What else is there to talk about?" He smiled back at her. She brushed past him and moved into the den. He followed.

Ben had met Emma the spring semester of her freshman year in college. He had signed up as a psychology tutor, in an effort to give back, he told himself, and Emma had defied all his expectations when she showed up as his first pupil, with her honey brown skin and her eager eyes and her lovely sadness. She said she had a killer test in a killer class, motivation and emotion, and she needed help. Ben told her he wanted to help. But the psychology lesson soon became a mutual study of anatomy, and the formalities of the teacher/student relationship

were breached the first night they were together.

The next morning, Emma flunked her test. The next night, she told her boyfriend about Ben. Now it was almost a year later, and the subject was cognitive psychology. The class had changed, but the study routine was the same. Emma's grades had not improved much.

Ben leaned against the doorway of his den and watched Emma pulling off her backpack and dropping it onto the couch and straightening her shirt. "Really, what did you and David talk about?" he asked.

"He's moving to Connecticut."

"I know. Why?"

"His brother lives there. He's getting a job in the studio where he works."

"Oh. A studio job. Can he show up drunk for that?" Emma was rooting through her backpack. Ben moved so he could just see down her shirt when she leaned over. "Does he know you're here now, with me?"

"No. He doesn't know where I am," she said, not bothering to look up. "But he knows I'm with you, if that's what you're asking."

"And you know where he is. On his way to Connecticut, right?" He moved a step closer to her, brought his body in line with hers, hung an arm around her shoulders, brought his mouth next to her ear. "I thought you didn't talk about me."

His arm slid off her shoulders as she turned to face him. She hugged her book close to her chest. "You want to get started?"

"I've been ready."

"Good. So have I."

"You want me to ask you questions from the book or make them up?"

"Either."

"I'll do both. Let's go outside."

They sat on the old rotten yellow couch just inside the patio. Ben filled the middle cushion, while Emma nestled her body against his and wedged her hands between her knees. Ben flipped open her fat textbook, *Cognition and Experience*, and leafed through the chapters. He felt Emma's warm muscles against his frame, and his mind drifted as he tossed back the pages, and his eyes fell on the concrete floor. He noticed a crusted bowl of milk on the

ground, probably a day old, at least, with a few ants stuck helpless around the rim. He nudged it away from him with his foot.

"Why do you do that?" he asked her. "The strays wouldn't have any reason to stick around if you didn't keep leaving milk and cookies for them."

"They like it."

"I don't like it." He settled on chapter five in the book. "And I don't like those goddamn cats. Who was Ribalt?"

"The perception guy."

"I'm going to poison this milk the next time you set it out here. What's Ribalt known for?"

"Experiments with nerve signals. He worked with Salk on how our brain compensates for the flash-lag effect."

"Good. Which is?"

"Flash-lag is the eighty millisecond delay between reception and perception. Our brain constructs awareness of an event or a sensation after it actually happens."

"Postdiction. Right. That's good. Did David finally clear all his stuff out of your place?"

"What stuff?"

"What stuff. That big empty CD rack, those stupid paintings of the ocean, his camera, shirts, pants, shoes? Everything that's been lying around in your closet for a year?"

"Yeah, he got it."

"So you took him back to your apartment?"

"He came to get his stuff, yeah."

"And he got it and now he's on his way to Connecticut?"

Emma pulled at a tangle in her ponytail. "I guess so."

"I guess that's good. Good for David. When was the flash-lag first discovered?"

"What do you think?"

"I want to know what you think. When do you think it was discovered?"

"What do you think happened?" She leaned back against the decayed cushions and planted her hands beside her hips. "Do you think I slept with him?"

"I have no idea," Ben said. "No. No, I know what happened. You ate lunch, then you took him back to your apartment, and he got his junk, and he left. Right? And he's driving

to Connecticut with all his junk he took from your closet, enjoying his empty CD rack and his goddamn seaside paintings, and he's headed to his new studio job where he may or may not be allowed to show up drunk and stoned and strung out, like he always does."

Ben watched Emma's reaction. Her delicate eyes held his in a firm stare and betrayed nothing. She sat motionless. He had never known a girl, or a woman, who could exploit silence the way she did. It was intolerable.

"1958," he said. "The flash-lag effect was discovered in 1958." He folded a page over and scanned a list of questions. "OK, this one's from the book: 'How does this phenomenon affect our ability to experience sensation, and how does it complicate our notions of reality?'"

"You'll never know what happened," Emma said. "Even if I told you every detail exactly, you wouldn't be satisfied, and you couldn't let yourself believe me. I saw David, and we talked, and he took his things and left. Or maybe I did sleep with him, and he's still at my apartment, waiting for me to get back so we can hump on the floor again and laugh at you. It doesn't matter what I say." She ripped the book from his hands and brought her finger down on the question he read to her. "'How does this phenomenon affect our ability to experience sensation, and how does it complicate our notions of reality?' It means we don't feel the things we touch when we think we're touching them. Our minds are subject to the limits of our bodies, so much so that we can't even detect what's happening at any one moment. It means we live in the past."

She slammed the book shut and stood. Ben watched her straighten her shirt and twist her hair behind her shoulders as she walked into the house. She emerged with her backpack on, gripping the straps with both of her fists, her face sealed in a resolute calm. She stepped off the patio and onto the grass and walked away from the house.

Ben followed her with his eyes until she was gone from his sight. He eased himself off the tattered couch, stooped to pick up the bowl of stale milk. He pitched the contents into the yard and carried the bowl inside, locking the door behind him.



Artifacts: A Study in Laminated Wood

Designers: Second Year Architecture Students
Studio Professor: Alan Cook



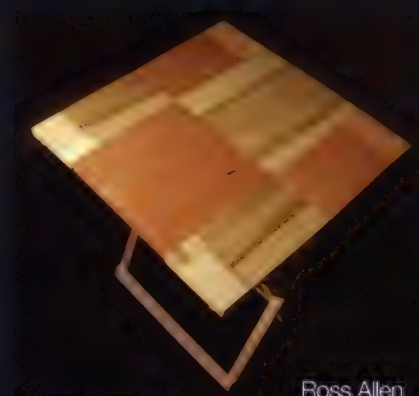
Taylor Massey



Sara Reischman



Michael Claborn



Ross Allen



Anna Bevil



David Simmons



Cem Kayatekin



Tony Fusco



Sean Palmer



Hillary Smith



Roger Mainor



On the rolling plains of Dixie
'Neath its sun-kissed sky,
Proudly stands, our Alma Mater
Banners high.

To thy name we'll sing thy praise,
From hearts that love so true,
And pledge to thee our
Loyalty the ages through.

We hail thee, Auburn, and we vow
To work for thy just fame,
And hold in memory as we do now
Thy cherished name.

Hear thy student voices swelling,
Echoes strong and clear,
Adding laurels to thy fame
Enshrined so dear.

From thy hallowed halls we'll part,
And bid thee sad adieu;
Thy sacred trust we'll bear with us
The ages through.

We hail thee, Auburn, and we vow
To work for thy just fame,
And hold in memory as we do now
Thy cherished name.







The smell of leaves would merge
With us after a while. The yellow was
Woven into our hair like the random
Red threads that sometimes
Show up in an otherwise black blanket. It blended
Better with hers, but it was foreign still. I don't quite know
Why it was entertaining, but we began the ritual each
Time the season returned for a visit. We weren't incredibly
considerate,
Causing such disarray. It was just all too enthralling to cause
Disorder in the neat towers, shaken but not stirred by the wind.
The traipsing invoked such rippling roars that denial was pure sin.
The commencement of our private waterfall was certainly
In order after the door fused with the house, but part of me
Didn't want to get wet just yet. As deeply as the dirt had grown,
I was still reluctant to let the Ivory meet my skin, for while it sent
The transparent leaves swirling
Down the drain, it washed the play away, too. I have cleansed
myself
Countless times since, but I can still sometimes catch the river
Of the yellow winter play that ended all too soon.

Another day, another interview. I sat in another dismal, cramped office, wearing my tired dark blue Brooks Brothers suit ("The same brand Lincoln wore when he was assassinated!" the salesman had told me excitedly), now liberally sprinkled with crumbled cream cheese which had fallen off the dozen or so frozen bagels I had consumed recently. I was prepared to give the same answers to the same questions asked by yet another disinterested interviewer. I struggled each time to sound thoughtful and spontaneous, though I suspected that my interviewers were as bored as I was.

A harried, ill-dressed man clasping a folder crammed with wrinkled papers sat down across the desk from me. I relaxed as I guessed that this man had probably only glanced at my application while on his way to the office, concentrating mostly on my board scores, and was likely anxious to return to his lab. But he proceeded to ask me about my personal statement, which prior interlocutors seem never to have read, inquiring about my JYA year in England and my reading habits. I scrambled for answers, trying desperately to dredge up memories of what I had written so hastily a few months before. As I was trying to regain equilibrium, he asked me a question I had not expected: "Can you think of any event during the course of medical school that has made a lasting impression upon you?"

Initially, I was taken aback, as I had not been asked such a question before, nor had

I considered it. Yet oddly, I had an answer. In fact, this incident had occurred while I was a visiting medical student at his own institution. I was there doing a gastroenterology rotation. The attending— who had reached his peak several decades before— was kind to me, but seemed to have lost interest in his discipline. His one remaining passion was barium enemas. Other members of the team included a Fellow who provided more information about Italian shoes than gastroenterology, and assorted house officers, all scrambling to do as many procedures as possible. Trying to impress the attending, I worked hard and read widely on all of my patients. However, it became clear that within the first few days that my primary job was to screen patients for endoscopy or other procedures. I rarely got the chance to observe the procedures, as the single teaching head was usually occupied by someone senior to me.

I had been asked to see an elderly gentleman for evaluation for a percutaneous feeding tube. Dutifully, I reviewed the chart and went to see the patient. He was demented and could give little history. The entire encounter lasted about 20 minutes. I ordered appropriate laboratories and went on my way. The problem seemed straightforward and I thought little more about it.

I suppose it would be odd that a memorable event would occur under such circumstances. A few hours later as I was returning to

the endoscopy suite, I saw them wheeling the old man into the room. He was yelling repeatedly "no, no, no" in a plaintive and sad voice. I followed him in and watched him being loaded on to the bed. He became more agitated and angry. I looked at him closely, apparently for the first time— a large beak like nose, dome-like bald head, small chin, and long, thin body. A flash of recognition shuddered through me. I realized he looked like me, or perhaps like I would in thirty or forty years. I moved closer to him, feeling sick and as if something cruel was happening.

Medications were administered and his cries slowly faded, leaving the beeps of the monitors and the chatter of the staff as the only sounds. The lights were dimmed with only the operating room light shining on the patient's pale face. The probe passed through the old man's now silent mouth and the light disappeared. A few seconds later, a soft yellow-orange glow, like the moon in an old Halloween decoration, emerged from his interior. It was at first diffuse and indistinct, but narrowed and became more intense as it tinted the skin. Then there was a knife and a flash of blood. The blue-robed figures closed around him and I saw no more.

I started to say something, to protest, but lacked the courage. I knew it would have done no good anyway. I turned and left the man sedated and violated on the table.



Sinking in ampersand,
Dust caught in my throat.

Blinding etceteras clouding my vision,
Cutting at my eyes with rock hard N's.

"Ands" blowing cross roads of redundancy,
Piling against ad-infinitums lined in a row.

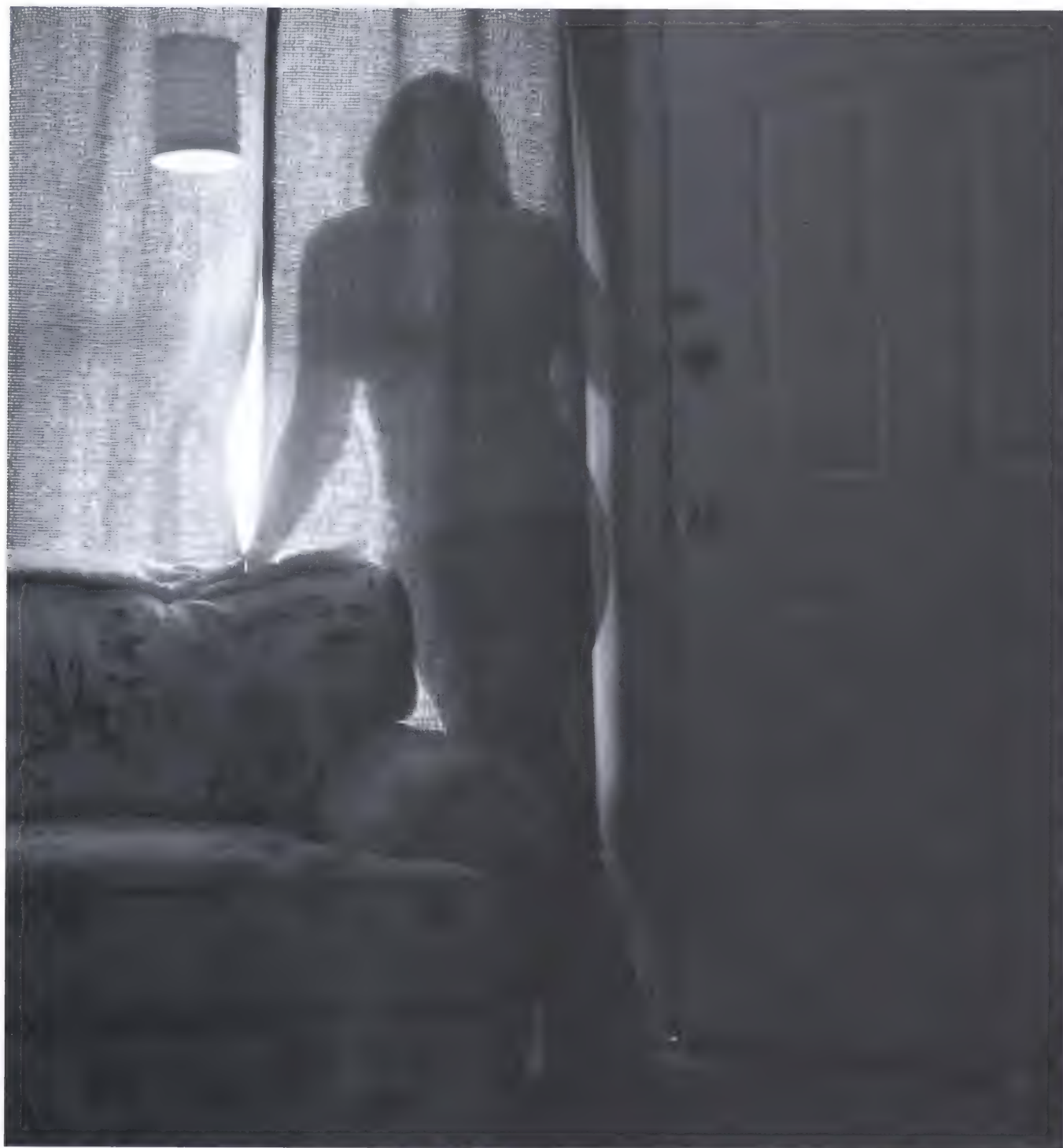
Superfluous lures me into ampersand,
Where I am sure to drown.

Throw me a lifeline of "period, all she wrote",
Either I'll catch it, or end with just one note.



the word of the evening was enemy, but you kept it to yourself. you went home again to find it wrinkled up on the dining room table, like a newspaper or a wedding dress. so you tossed it in the bin.

on a train, it sat beside you and lit a cigarette; you changed seats and scowled. it ran down your arm in the shower, through the quick and easy path made by the veins in your forearm. so you buried it in the garden like they buried your grandfather, who fell like lightning down the marble staircase.



as lips to wrist
delicate caress
of flame and paper consumption

this is not war
we are not soldiers

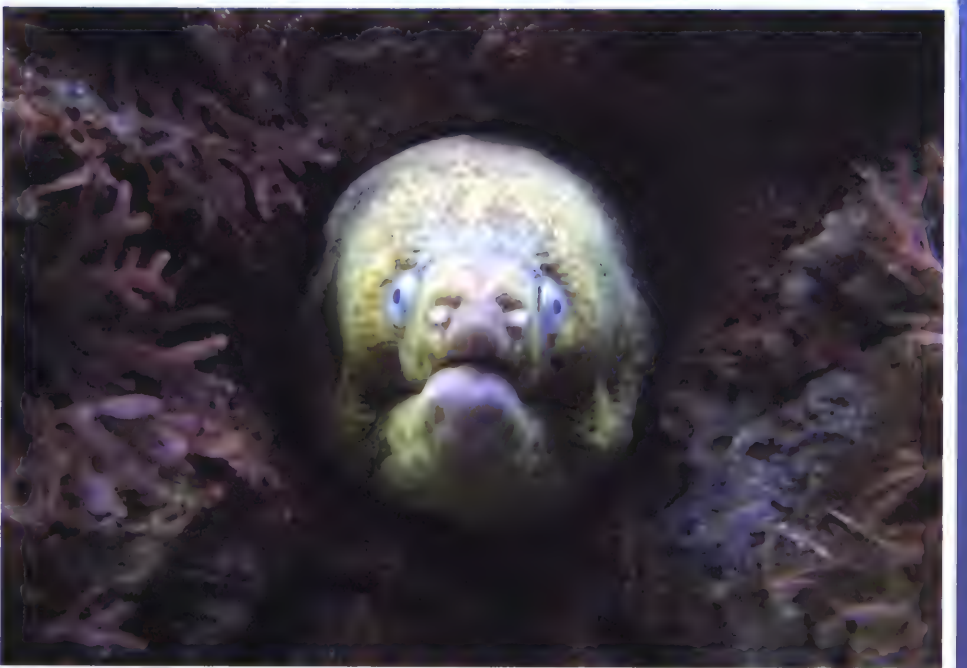
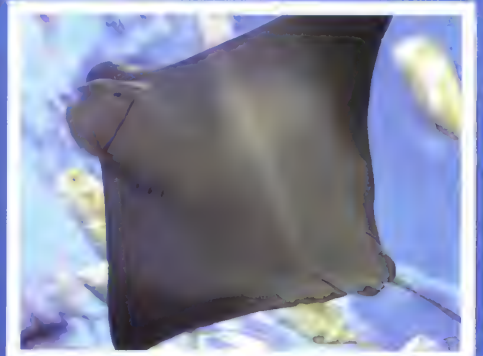
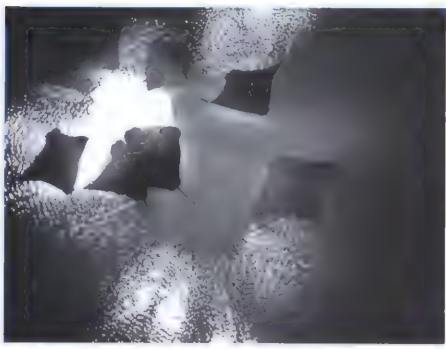
we are paper and flame
you are neither
i am the same
together we fire and fiber
until both are no longer what they were

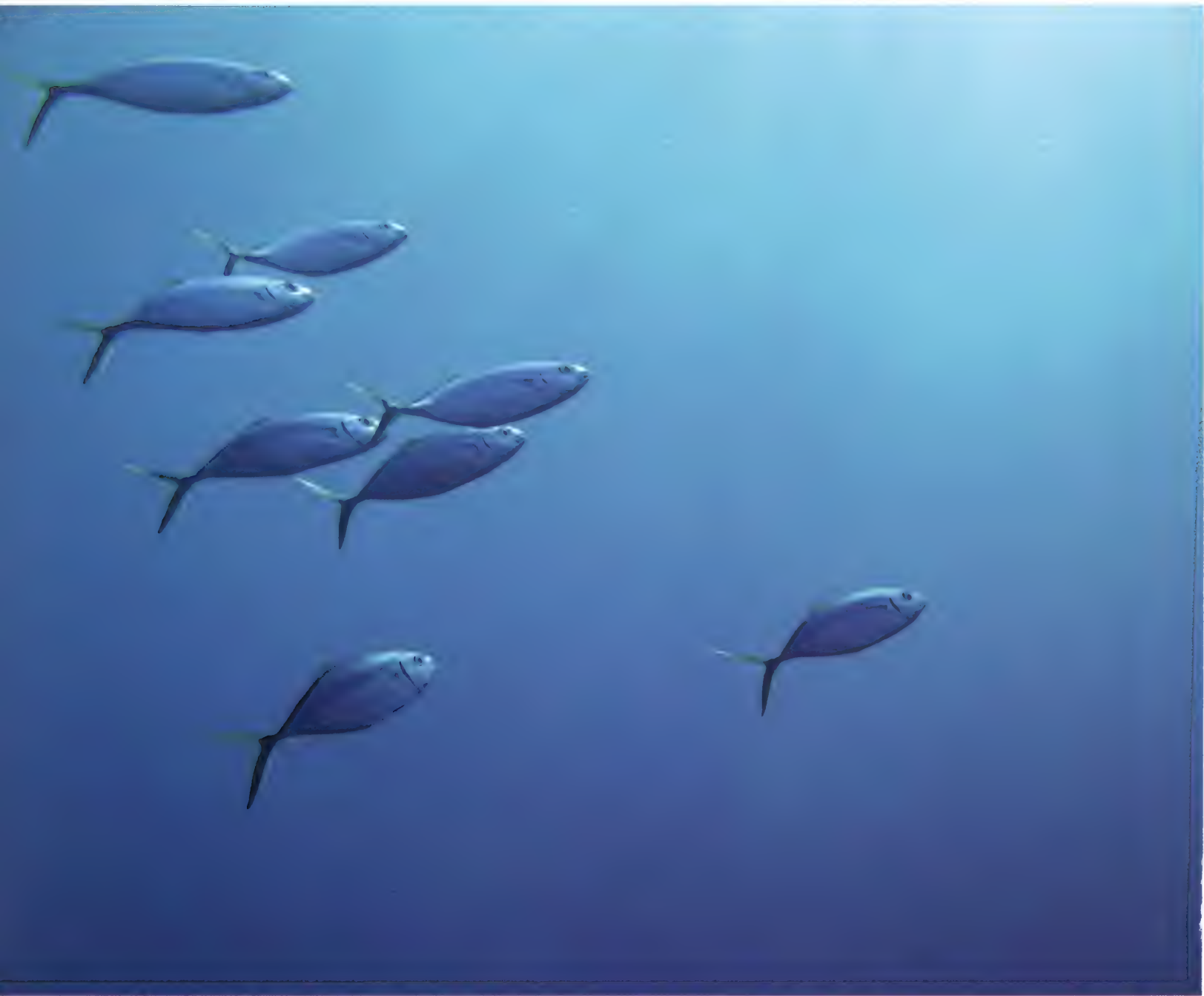
now ash and dust
and blown to wind
spreading manic remembrances
of blaze into dusk beyond demise

there never was a creature such as death
just the illusion of something we believed once
when we were nothing
but naked chaos
and roiling void









little closer little closer
down

down down down

deep deep down
blue blue everywhere

up
can't

up up up
can't do it

breathe
no

breathe breathe
no

reach
can i

further
can i

do it now
i can

hey girl hallelujah
a ride in the carnival wheel
tall enough to ride when you're on my shoulders
bigger than they were last christmas
i still don't really know what love is
but let's drink until we figure it out together

peppermint handprints keen green on the movie screen
love in your eyes and thighs
no one except CAIN denies
where your brother fell and died
in a carnival field

how your hands got so pink we'll never know
but hot damn it was orange on the way down
like the coal in love's cigarette
and i'll exhale
while the white moon seduces the sun
in yellow skyfire sheets



"In my solitude you taunt me with memories that never die."

—Louis Armstrong, Solitude

A lone figure steps through a pale blue doorway onto a concrete balcony and is greeted by a cold breeze and a dim sun. Across the way there is a parking lot where cars rest upon yellow tattooed asphalt. Past the lot are trees spared from the axes and chainsaws of progress and they sway with the wind while their leaves cling onto the branches. The aging oak sighs and bows. The evergreens stab towards the sky and the delicate dogwoods shiver and weep.

Between the figure's lips rests a white and brown cylindrical paper casket stuffed with the remains of a shredded dead plant and cancer causing chemicals. Often the figure has been told by friends, media and strangers, "You know those things will kill you."

"When?" is the only reply he can muster, which is often received with looks of disdain and contempt.

His hand reaches into a worn denim pocket and retrieves a slim, rectangular, metal brushed lighter. With a quick flick of a wrist the lighter opens with a loud pop-chink that echoes off the brick wall and the concrete floor of the balcony. The figure then rests his index finger on the grind wheel, pulls on it and he hears the snap-scratch across the flint followed by caressing warmth and flickering orange light. He briefly watches as the flame dances with the breeze around the wick and then brings the lighter to the cigarette and dips the end into the heart of the flame.

The figure inhales deeply, retracts his head from the flame and snaps his wrist to seal the lighter and extinguish the flame. A hand reaches up and removes the coffin nail from his lips and he exhales the pollution from his lungs. A pillar of smoke is expelled from his mouth and briefly lingers before it is carried away by the wind. Soon he can smell the distinct scents of

burning sulfur, methane, ozone and genetically enriched tobacco. The figure begins to feel his pulse quicken and it's not long before he takes another drag.

With every nicotine kiss his mind starts to wander. Memories thought forgotten begin to creep in and he is taken back to a place that no matter how hard he has tried he can't escape it. The figure remembers a time when he woke up every morning and stepped onto a balcony to watch a golden emblazoned sun overtake an emerald mountain. He remembers the cool morning air, wooden planks damp from dew and smells of pine, mildew, cigarette smoke and cheap designer shampoo. A gentle warmth begins to permeate through his t-shirt onto his skin and he can feel a tender heartbeat that soothes his own.

"It's beautiful, don't you think?" a sweet voice says from beneath him, breaking the silence.

He feels fine threads of silk glide under his chin and he can detect faint smells of jasmine and rosemary. The figure looks down to see pure obsidian hair that reflects the climbing sun. His eyes avert back to the scenery and he whispers, "Always."

She leans back into him and a sigh of contentment escapes her as she continues to take in the wonderment of the sight before her. The figure moves a hand and rests it comfortably onto her belly. She nuzzles in closer to him and with a quick tensing of his fingertips he playfully scratches at the surface of her stomach. Her body gleefully spasms and a series giggles escape from her. She then slaps at his hand as to say, "I told you not to do that," but instead it only serves as encouragement to continue. This time using both hands he titillates her sensitive torso and she doubles over with laughter.

Finally, the vixen frees herself from his mirth-inducing clutches and throws her own arms around his neck. The figure stares deeply into her ghost gray eyes and doesn't dare to look

away. He begins to feel his eyes drying out but he holds back the urge to hydrate them just so he can look a little longer. Suddenly, the involuntary action takes over and by the time his eyes have closed and reopened, she is gone.

The figure heaves a groan of malcontent and resentment at himself for bringing back those memories. He had done his best to forget these moments of his life. No amount of beer and whiskey could chase them away. No matter how many times he woke up in strange beds with strange women, he couldn't rid himself of all those nights spent with her. No matter what he threw away--whether it be pictures, letters, postcards or even clothes--there would always be something that reminded him of her. The memories would be with him forever and ever.

The figure looked to his cigarette and saw that it was almost gone. He took one final long drag, rolled the butt between his thumb and middle finger, and flicked it over the balcony railing out into the parking lot. He exhaled the last of the smoke as he watched the remaining cigarette fly through the air. It tumbled end over end flaring red as the lit end was hit with the sudden rush of oxygen. Finally, the burning wreckage slammed into the ground, bounced several times and gradually rolled to a stop, still smoldering.

He looked up over the parking lot, past the trees and up to the sky; there was nothing there. No clouds. No birds. No planes; just sky that went on forever and ever. He smiled as he looked away from something so perfect and rested his forearms on the railing of the balcony. Soon the breeze picked up and the cold air sent chills down his back, ushering him to go back inside. The figure pushed away from the railing and before he could turn away, he looked out past the trees once more and could almost see that emerald mountain with the golden sun perched on its shoulders. His smile fading, the figure walked backed through the pale blue doorway and shut the door behind him.



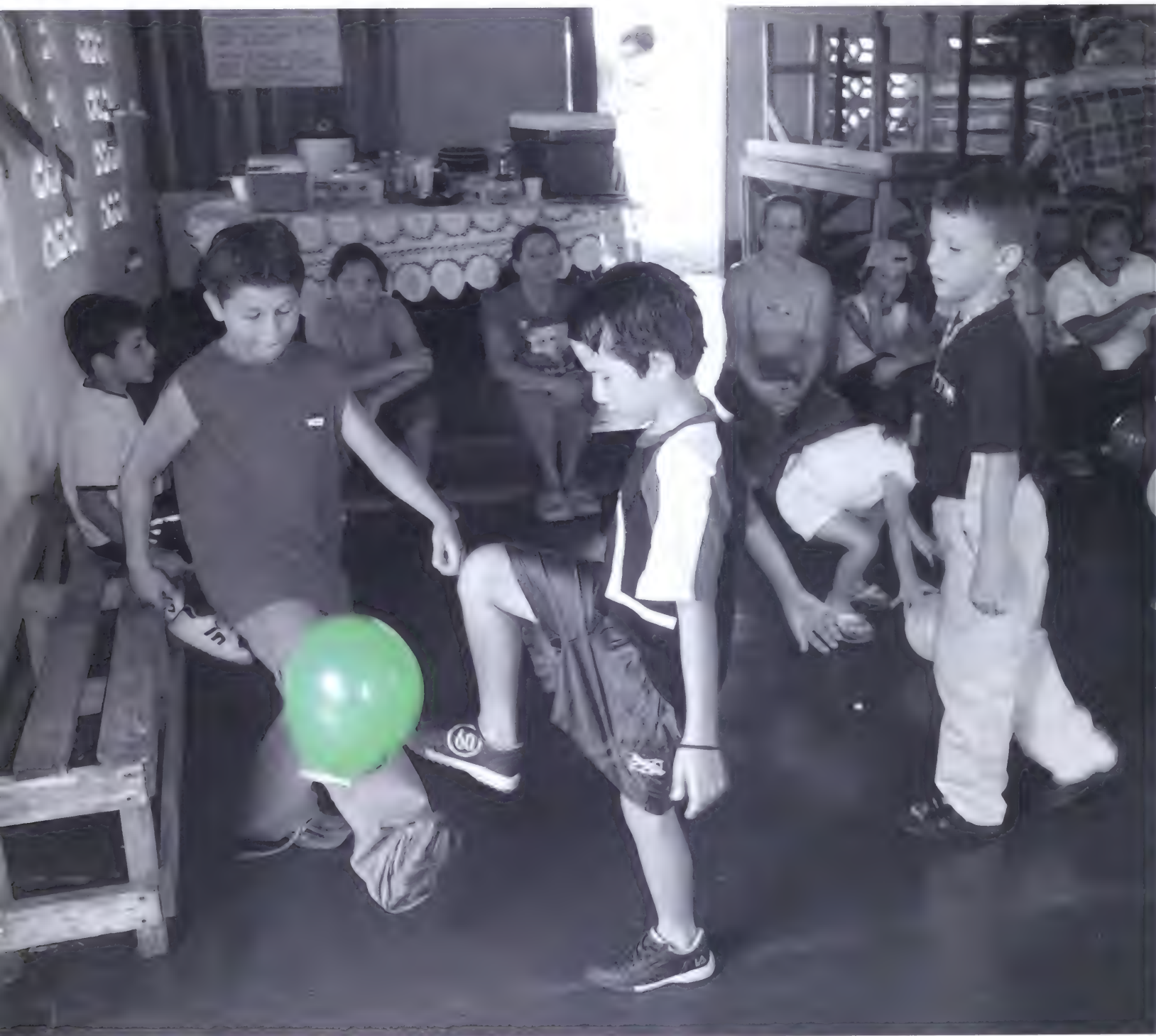
Rococo Zen boogie,
Dance with all your might.

Satori surprise pie,
Bow and dip your mother tonight.

Ruffled sleeves put on airs,
No Mind pirouettes out the door.

Beats hum Oneness,
Chilling behind satin eyelids.

Rococo Zen boogie,
Until the morning light.







I have lived in silence for the past three years. My journals, once teeming with that adolescent blend of confessions, romantic ponderings, and idealistic notions, are now buried under an old file box, behind the white "Give to Goodwill" bag, in the most cavernous part of my closet. They are, of course, incomplete, still ripe with crisp blank paper that feels heavy with expectation. Recently, I have developed the nervous habit of leaving all of my clothes outside my closet, letting them sit un-hung in my shabby brown chair, pretending that they belong there. When my friends shake their heads, I laugh and blame it on my laziness. But, secretly, I know I'm afraid of the journals—not for what is written in them, but for what is unwritten. In the past three years of college, I have become fearful of writing.

What makes my situation perhaps even more perplexing is the fact that I'm an English major. My enthusiasm for the written word has led me to embrace endless nights of research, frequent over-analysis, and even the increasingly appealing thought of applying to graduate school. I have written countless numbers of papers, yet not once in my college career has a single poem, journal entry, or first sentence for a doomed short story escaped from my pen. When registering for classes, I fly past the creative writing section; while taking the required Personal Essay course, I prided myself on managing to write the most impersonal essays I could conjure up. Every semester, I immediately delete any e-mail requesting submissions to the Auburn Circle. Yet with every click of my mouse a deep feeling of guilt washes over me, leaving in its wake only traces of emptiness and a reminder of things forgotten. Why, at a time in my life where self-discovery has been a daily endeavor and my rate of emotional growth the sharpest, have I ceased to creatively express myself in writing?

Perhaps (I tell myself) I am just not the creative writing "type." My greatest skills lie in the interpretation of literature, not in the creation of new forms. In the past, my attempts at story writing have been fraught with clichés and submerged within that dreadful realm of the

banal. Why risk cramping my hand writing words that have already been written, probably in a more sophisticated manner? I have no desire to publish or print creatively; there is no need for me to write. Yet this explanation only manages to soothe me temporarily, and I know that the fear of banality does not account for the empty journal pages, reserved for only my pleasure and enjoyment.

Nor does my hypothesis of increased inadequacy justify my silence. Throughout college I have been fortunate in developing increased confidence with both myself and in my writing skills. Indeed, before college, I was associated with being timid and unsure of myself. But now I have developed the reputation for being friendly and approachable. In my daily conversations, I am typically brimming with new ideas about life and the world, at times to the exasperation of my listeners. Although I will admit that greater competition within the literary field has led me—at times—to question and double guess my academic writing skills, I cannot say that this is true in relation to my lack of creative writing. I have been given a greatly positive college experience which has encouraged my creative thinking and ideas about the world.

Maybe—some would say—that is precisely my problem: I am just too happy. No one writes when they are actually satisfied with life; you are too busy with the merry bustle of school and social activities to actually sit and write introspective thoughts. Just wait until I get into the "real world"—or even worse—grad school. All of my forgotten feelings of misery and despair will most assuredly return to me, and I undoubtedly will once again fill page upon page with pitiful analogies about the sea and the brevity of time. After all, didn't T.S. Eliot himself say that truly good poets should endeavor to "write as little as possible?" Perhaps I am merely adhering to this Divine Order of writing. I should just contentedly wait in the hall termed Writer's Block until Inspiration taps me on the shoulder.

Yet again I am left unsatisfied by the explanation. I feel strangely unsettled by my lack of writing; a fear grows within me. I can sense

the half-filled journals beginning to burn through the file box, the words mobilizing into military units. At night, I am plagued with insomnia as I struggle against the inevitable moment: when the Word Army will surge forth from my closet and attack. It will brand my skin with adjective, noun, verb—until all that is left of me is a tangled vocabulary. I know that unless I understand why I have stopped writing, I will be overwritten by history with illegitimate words. I will have only my body to speak for me, and when my body dies—nothing.

I have had this feeling of unease before. Strangely, it occurred in my fifth grade classroom, during an American history lesson. There in our history book within the margins of the page was a small yellow box titled "Roanoke: The Lost Colony." As I read, I learned about the fated British colonists, left by their captain to face the wilderness on their own with limited supplies. Upon returning two years later, the captain discovered an eerie sight. Dining tables contained full place settings and half-eaten bread, closets were full of clothes, and front doors were mysteriously left open. Yet no person could be found. Only the word "CROATOAN" carved on a tree offered any sort of clue as to the whereabouts of the settlers. Historians have contemplated possible scenarios: Indian attacks, sickness, ghosts, even alien abduction, but most have left the mystery behind—afraid, perhaps, of discovering the truth.

In many ways, my writing has become like the Lost Roanoke Colony—crudely interrupted, recklessly abandoned without any clue as to the whereabouts of its founder. It has been left to the interpretation of unconcerned readers, readers who are either too important or too busy to bother with fantastical accounts of supernatural disappearances. I, in turn, have become a sign of my own absence, attesting only to the untold nature of my story. And why? Because I, too, have become afraid of the truth; afraid of what my own narrative will uncover. Perhaps it should reveal that there are indeed supernatural figures within myself: ghosts which restlessly haunt my past mistakes; aliens which constantly threaten



to abduct my identity? What then am I to do with the horrors that lie within that impossibly singular word "I?" How can I reconcile these fragments that construct my sense of self while simultaneously threatening to destroy it?

When I was younger, no danger existed in writing. "Truth" was a definitive term, and "dreams" were only events to be realized one day. Now, writing possesses a dangerous power. It lurks and lingers, threatens and manipulates. It is not merely an extension of my inner self; rather, it creates multiple selves in which to inhabit. And, in perhaps its most frightening form of all, writing changes I to "I,"--a doomed signifier attesting to its own unstable definition. How can I write when I am doomed to write my own requiem of identity? With every stroke of the pen my words betray me; every sentence acts as a double agent. I am fated to die by friendly fire.

Yet, despite it all—despite the uncertainty that writing inevitably gives to my identity, I know that I will never be content to reside in silence. Now, three months from graduating, I recognize that only through writing my "self" can I possibly hope to catch glimpses of that ever-shifting "I." I must brave the fear of exposure, and allow my writing to take its own form. In short, I must return to Roanoke and search for clues of my own whereabouts. I will not be able to pick up the pieces and begin as if I had never left, for I am not there. The gaps themselves are clues to my narrative. Instead, I must walk around the island, listen to the ghosts, examine the broken artifacts. In writing, I must acknowledge both the mystery and the disruption. It is possible that I might never again write in my unfilled journals, but they still require excavation. And when I begin a new journal, I must approach it in honesty, ready to receive the truths that only writing can provide. Perhaps I will be lucky and discover that I have left a clue for myself, and find my name carved on a tree. Or perhaps I will discover nothing but misleading fog and dense underbrush. Either way, it is too late now. The boat for Roanoke has already set sail, and I as captive am bound to its destination. The closet door beckons. I take a deep breath, turn the knob, and begin to write—perhaps for the very first time.



The "Feelin' Phine" sticker on the doorway was the first piece of evidence that this house, referred to as "The Porch" by the members of Virgin Eddie, was a rock n' roll haven. It had obviously been through countless tenants and keggers. Muted drum beats and guitar riffs grew louder as we were led into a room where a broken chandelier dangled from the ceiling over a barrel-turned-table. An array of band posters decorated the walls, paying homage to some of Virgin Eddie's influences which include Pearl Jam, the Smashing Pumpkins, the Strokes and Nine Inch Nails.

When we arrived, the members of Virgin Eddie, with the exception of our tour guide and guitarist, Justin Murray, were practicing one of their newest songs which has yet to receive a name. Carefully stepping over beer bottles and playing cards, we walked through a doorway adorned with long strands of wooden beads into a dimly lit room filled with a large collection of musical equipment and embellished with strung lights. Behold the home of Virgin Eddie, a band that is reminiscent of the 90's alternative rock era when music was hard and mosh-pit worthy.

Virgin Eddie consists of four members: Ben Mendel on bass, Trey Woodfin on drums and Justin Murray and Anderson Green on guitar. When asked their majors, they responded, "Virgin Eddie." Their band is an invaluable part of their lives. "We try to practice once every day," says Anderson. "As long as school doesn't interfere," adds Ben.

As a new band on the Auburn scene, they claim not to fit into the scene too snugly. "No Freebird, no Jesse's Girl," says Anderson

Green, the band's lead guitarist and vocalist, as he explains why Auburn students haven't immediately taken to the band's divergent sound. They don't play country or jam band music, and they're not an 80's cover band like the many that the Auburn music scene is flooded with. To find one that doesn't fit the mold is rare and exciting. "Pearl Jam meets the Strokes" is the most accurate description of their edgy sound because of their Pearl Jam-like intensity and their guitar riffs and vocals similar to those commonly used by The Strokes. This unique sound grew from experimenting with lots of different styles including "strokey rock" and "jam stuff." Gradually, they narrowed down their sound into a meshing of various styles. "We kind of got away from the jam stuff," says Justin.

Getting gigs around town is tough with the overabundance of same-old-sounding bands that somehow bring in the crowds. However, Virgin Eddie frequents Bourbon Street and has performed at The Ole Auburn Ale House, Sky Bar and Quixote's. Venturing beyond Auburn, Virgin Eddie has also played at The End in Nashville. Their favorite venue at which to perform remains Bourbon Street, however, because of the cool staff and mellow crowd they encounter there.

Anderson, Trey and Justin came together as a band during their freshman year, and Ben came into the mix a year later. However, Trey, Justin and Ben are all from Huntsville and have been close friends for years. "Trey and I were born on the same day, and we've known each other since we were three years old. We started playing music together when we were freshmen

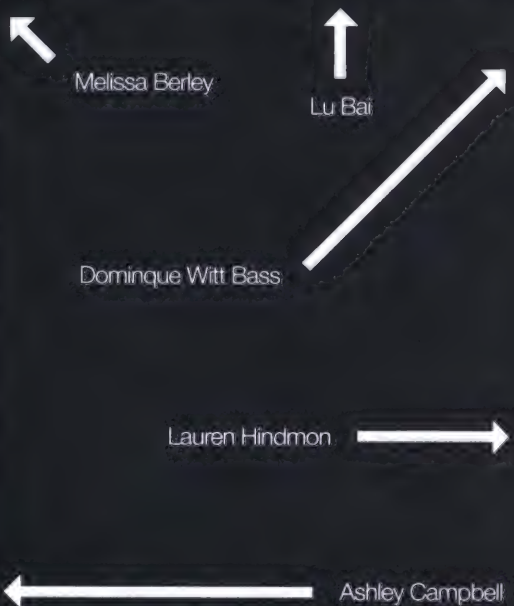
in high school," explains Justin. The members, as they put it, "connected." "They had to wait for me to get here" remarks Ben.

For Virgin Eddie, the music comes first and the lyrics later. From the composition, lyrics are born like an afterthought. Although the songs are arranged by every member of the band together, Anderson writes all of the lyrics. They spring from whatever feelings or thoughts the music summons in his mind. His subject matter ranges from trivial feelings like his fear of flying to deeper, indiscernible sentiments like "when you feel guilty or nervous about something and you see everyone else smiling and you wish you could do that," Anderson explains. When asked what his favorite original lyrics are, Anderson responded with this verse from one of the band's favorite songs: "Diamonds that surround him shine to where he's blinded, then he stumbles from a bending road."

Virgin Eddie is a young band that is still establishing itself. They recorded a demo over the holiday break, but plan on scrapping it, and even their name is subject to change. They have a strong foundation, though, and a promising future outlook. This summer they have plans to record a live show in Orlando, Florida, with their friend Todd Haller who is a member of Liquid Caravan, another local band. Virgin Eddie enthusiasts can look forward to owning that DVD by next fall. The members might take a year or two off from work and school to solely devote their time and energy to Virgin Eddie. "Just until Justin can grow a beard," jokes Trey. Meanwhile, the boys continue to practice and compose new tunes as often as time will allow.

Doors: A Study in Concrete

Designers: Third Year Architecture Students
Studio Professor: Tarik Örgen



Melissa Berley

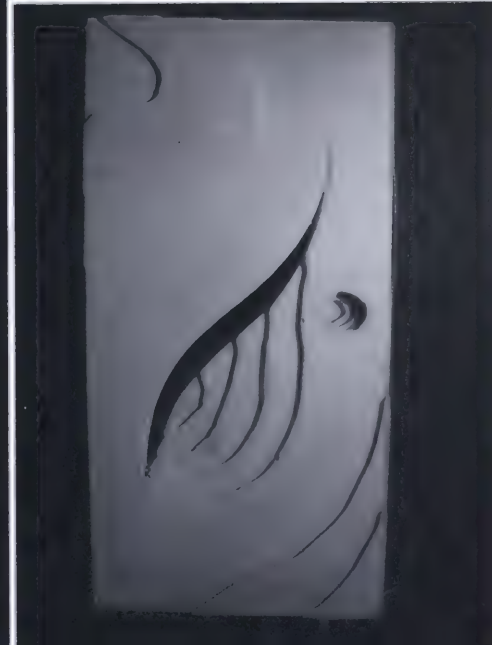
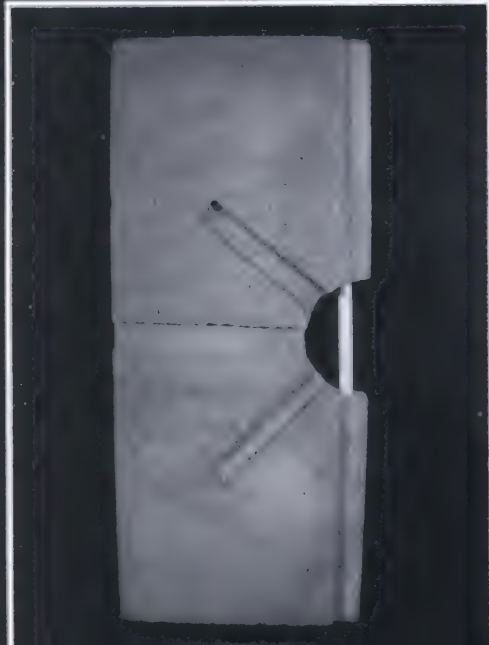
Lu Bai

Dominique Witt Bass

Lauren Hindmon

Ashley Campbell





Pentecost is a piece of prose in which each sentence is one word shorter than the sentence preceding it.

In a hallway, dark and narrow, a young boy (seven on his last unnoticed birthday) crouches, his blonde head pressed in tiny, trembling hands. He has been waiting for some time, so patient and so good, for his absent mother to come out of the closed confessional. She is tall and fair and has dark eyes that land on the ceiling, on the floor, and just past his face. Outside, a lightening bolt pierces the sky and the stained glass Stations of the Cross are suddenly visible, then gone again. In a hallway, dark and narrow, a young boy waits for his mother to emerge from the confessional, emerge anew. Patient and good, the young boy presses his blonde head into tiny, trembling hands; against fingers weaved with Rosary. Lightening flashes; Simon carries the cross of Christ; the young boy prays the only way he knows how. He whispers, "Saint Anthony, Saint Anthony, please come around – something has been lost and cannot be found." In a hallway, dark and narrow, a young boy waits and wears a look of shame. He is patiently waiting for his absent mother, so unreachably tall, to confess her sin. When she emerges from the confessional, she will not see him there, so small. As she approaches, he will rise up, abandoned prayers spilling onto the floor. She will, dark eyes burning a hole in Heaven, walk past him. He will freeze a moment, face transforming from hope to horror. In a hallway, dark and narrow, a boy is lost. On this day, especially, he tried to be good. Lightening flashes again; the rock seals the tomb. Not once will his mother glance back. Despairing, he will run after her. But her legs are long. They're built to run. He knows this. And cries. Alone.





A bat, broken
by the wind, wings
tattered, dripping
on my cold, red floor.

I can almost see him again standing underneath that tree. The scene from six years ago seems to float in front of my eyes as I stand outside in my driveway, shaking a bit from the cold, staring toward the large oak tree at the edge of the yard. It was my first kiss. My parents used to call me their "late bloomer;" I was sixteen. I remember not knowing what to do with my hands. I mean, how do you know where to put them? The movies make it look so easy, but it sure didn't come to me like that. His name was Thomas. He was a head taller than me, about 6'2 and had light brown hair that would fall over his eyes if he turned just the right way. He was shy, but strangely confident. He matched perfectly with my tall, slim figure and my long brown hair. He had all these goals that were going to make him rich one day and at times I wondered how he would ever do it all. Looking back, I can't believe he never will.

Thomas and I went to a dance together long before our first kiss. I once thought we were a generation behind since we moved so slowly physically. But it was okay with me. I remember the first time I felt something from his touch. We were walking through the crowd to get off the dance floor and we were trying to stay together. I was wearing a long blue dress that I had to hold with one hand so I wouldn't trip on the hem. He reached back and grabbed my hand and laced his fingers through mine, leading me off floor. I don't know why it felt so intimate to have his fingers between mine. He didn't let go of my hand until we reached the edge of the dance floor and when he did, I felt as if the warmth had been sucked out of me.

I had that same feeling two years later. It was the day I told him I had cheated on him; it was the day that I ended "us." We had been dating for almost two years, but I had a brief crush during a summer trip to Mexico. He had stayed home that summer before we left for college and told me he could not wait till we got to school and we could see each other whenever we wanted. But I had to tell him about John, the tall and tan American tourist that I didn't love, but

I had been with anyway. I remember sitting on the edge of his dorm room bed, staring at my hands as I gripped the edge of the thin mattress and telling him that I thought we needed a break. He agreed and I could tell from his voice that he thought I didn't really mean it. He had said "okay" in that voice that told me he thought he knew more about what I was feeling than I did. So I told him. He shook his head a bit and didn't say much when I was done. I was mad at him even as I held back tears. He hadn't tried to contact me that much during the summer, so I thought it was his fault I needed John. He said we probably did need a break. So that was it.

He died in a car wreck three years later, one night after he had been out at a bar downtown. I heard the news the next day from an old friend. I felt hollow, like no feelings existed inside of me. His fraternity brothers dragged him out and called 911, but he never woke up. He was drunk, but decided to drive himself home anyway. This was the guy who used to volunteer to be the sober driver.

I thought about my current boyfriend, Mathew, as I drove to the funeral home that late February morning. He claimed to understand why I needed to go home for Thomas's funeral. Mathew had met Thomas once in passing when one of my friends had introduced them. I had not introduced them because Thomas and I stopped talking directly about a year ago. We had the gift of being in the same conversation and still failing to include the other. I didn't know when it started or why, it had just felt right. I knew Matthew didn't really understand why I had to go, but he tried to tell me he did. I appreciated that and felt like I should love him more for it.

I parked between a red sports car and an old grey Buick sedan. I knew I should cry when I saw him or at least look like I was holding back, but I didn't know how I was going to do it. I wasn't feeling anything but empty. I pulled on my heels as I stepped out of the blue old Ford explorer. I walked toward the door of the funeral home, gravel crunching under my heel as I walked past people who were talking

quietly in small clumps all around the entrance. I walked through the glass doors, which were held open for me by a small plump man in a black suit. His nametag told me his name was Robert and he was an usher that works for the memorial home. It was a formal place done in blues and golds with white trimming around the doors. I saw a table to my left with a book to sign in and several pictures of Thomas on it. They were in different size frames and obviously came from coffee table or mantle, probably in his parent's home. I shook hands with his father just inside the door and hugged his mother. I walked through the people, trying to get to the back of the room. I recognized many people and several people tried to catch my eye. I ignored them and made my way through the crowd until I saw the casket. It was black with silver edging and I stopped about three feet away and looked into the opening. Thomas lay inside, his profile showing just over the edge of the coffin. He was wearing a blue suit and his hands were folded on top of his stomach, as if he were waiting patiently for something. He didn't look like he wasn't breathing.

I stared at his hands. His long fingers were interlocked between one another and just resting. I had an impulse to reach out to them, but stopped when I reminded myself this was a dead body. Instead, I clasped my hands the same way, resting them just below my waist. My hands were icy and I could feel the cold soak through the black silk that covered my stomach. I needed to feel something. Then I did feel. I felt the need to get away from him. I pushed my way back through the crowd and made it past the plump man at the door. I walked out into the sunshine and looked around at the graveyard. This place was called a Memorial Garden. Each tombstone was flat on the ground and was marked with a huge flowering bush of some kind. Everywhere you looked you saw little flowering plants, each marking a body. I wondered what kind of plant would be Thomas.



When troubles, toils, and tainted fates
Wrap raging, frothing, maddening wraiths
Around my ever sleepless eyes,
I ponder still with hasty, "Why's?"

Seamless, endless, rolling days
Lend heart and soul to shifting haze,
And when the nights breathe first
Their sigh, I wrap my own in lullabies.

Still softly soaked in dreams I gave
She'll yet to wake before my ways
Do long and moan in lonely lights,
For night has yet to shed her might.

In Scottish lands their chimes a tune,
Wrote for a boy that died too soon.
Though breath he held for ages still,
A part of him still wept for 'Jill.'

If 'Jack' did fall from grace and height
Then name me 'fool' who matched his plight,
With faded terms to cross the gates,
Of love, love lost, and fallen fates.

Now names be damned and rot the stars
Who bound these loves in mournful bars
To care and see how long would blast
The cries of he who held her last.

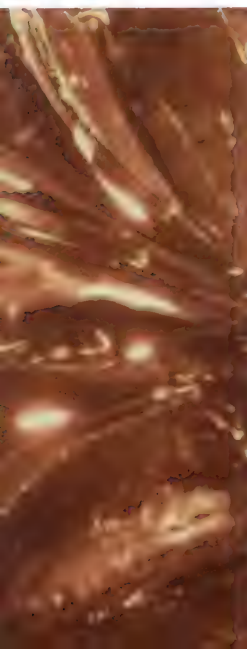
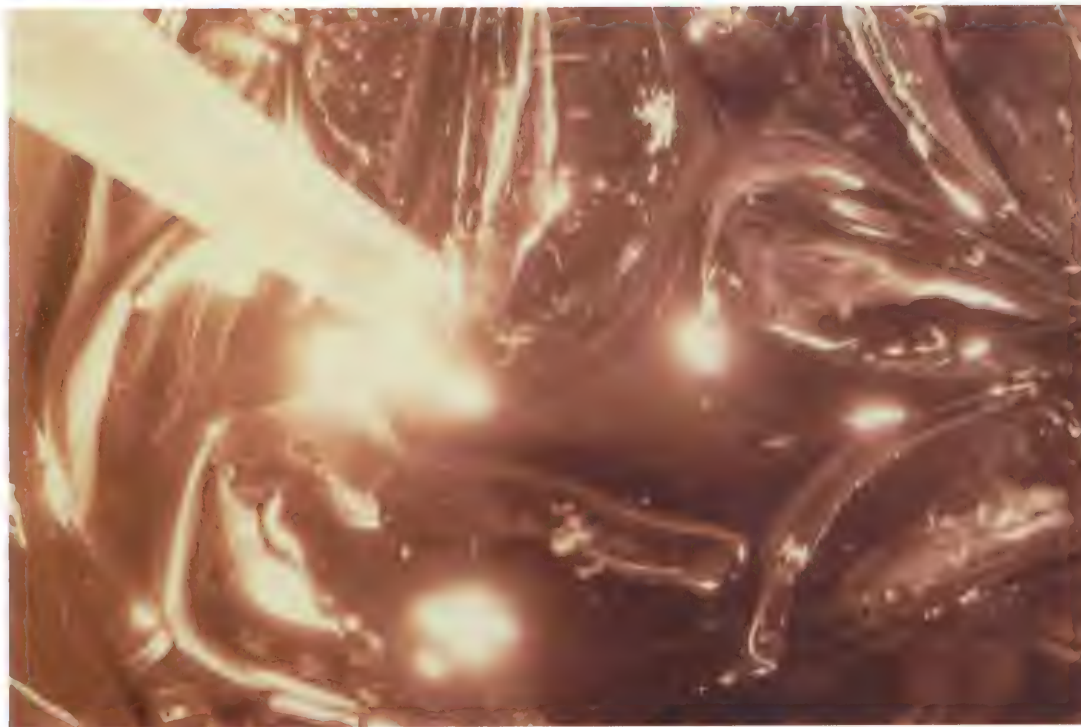
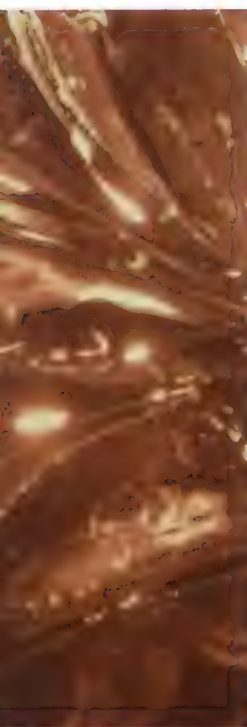
So cringe sick dreams and flee me now,
You've taken more than Satan's plow.
Fly hidden secrets and hidden names,
The last in love has birthed my bane.





barely even rarely present
that's counting when your heart is in it
you've got to look to the front of the bored
to see what they're missing
daydreams work no better than night dreams
solid as soft ice cream
the necessary drive won't cost you a cent
and opportunity can knock it's socks off
but somebody's got to make a way for it
somebodies got to move bodies, take bodies,
make plans turn to action
surely if Jesus could turn water into wine
then we can turn time into a productive thing

My personal prison
Plastic walls
Tunneling madly
A gasp of air
A menacing beast
Dressed in yellow
Sinister smile
Buried again
Unable to move
Last fleeting moment
The Hamburglar stole my wallet.



"WEIRDEST THING, JEFF. IT WAS THE GODDAMN WEIRDEST THING. I dreamt I was flying this plane, this little biplane like the ones we used to make models of and blow up with bottle rockets in Bowman's Field. Remember those planes, Jeff? Damn, those were good times – loved it when those girls would run away from that noise so fast that their skirts would fly up behind them! And they'd have their hands over their ears and not even bother to pull those little skirts down. I'll remember that summer for the rest of my life; I'll remember it for those skirts and those wooden planes and the way the sun melted like a red rubber ball into the tops of the trees.

"Anyway, I was in this tiny, rickety, God-for-saken plane – I mean the engines are literally falling off – and Jean's voice, my fricken' ex-wife's voice comes over the radio like she's in the control tower, but to me it's like she's in my ears, my head, breathing down my neck like she always was. And you know what she says, Jeff? You know what Jean, after these four long years, says?

"She says, 'HOLD ON, IT'S GOING TO BE A ROUGH RIDE.'"

"Jeff, it was just like those cocky fliers when they'd try to land a chopper in the middle of a forest – we never knew if they were talking to us because we were alive and liable to be sick, or to the smoking halves of bodies because they were dead and couldn't hold themselves still – and I smile because it's so good to hear her voice. Voice of an angel, that woman had. I remember the first time I laid ears on her; it was like that song, I heard her voice and I was a believer. How'd it go? Not a trace of doubt in my mind. Yeah, it's corny, laugh all you want, but the whole of Oklahoma never heard a voice like that. Only thing sweeter, only thing more sugary was the homemade maple syrup my mother used to serve over her pancakes done up perfectly with sliced bananas. Jean used to make them – imitate them, really – and even if they

came out a bit burned, I'd eat them like I was hungry as a bear. She thought she was really making me happy in those days – and she was, it wasn't all about the pancakes, then – and I knew it because she'd stand over me while I was eating and turn her wedding ring around her finger the same way she'd do it when we was lying in bed at night with the windows open and the crickets singing lullabies to us from under the porch.

"Her voice was just as sweet when she told me she was leaving, Jeff. Really, it was. And so I couldn't hate her...not with a voice like that. Man, I couldn't even hate you for taking her from me; after all, each and every one of us needed a woman like Jean after a war like Vietnam, and who was I to be so greedy? I don't figure it would have been right to keep that sort of happiness to myself, not after everything we went through with each other, after that shrapnel in our skin and that stink in our clothes.

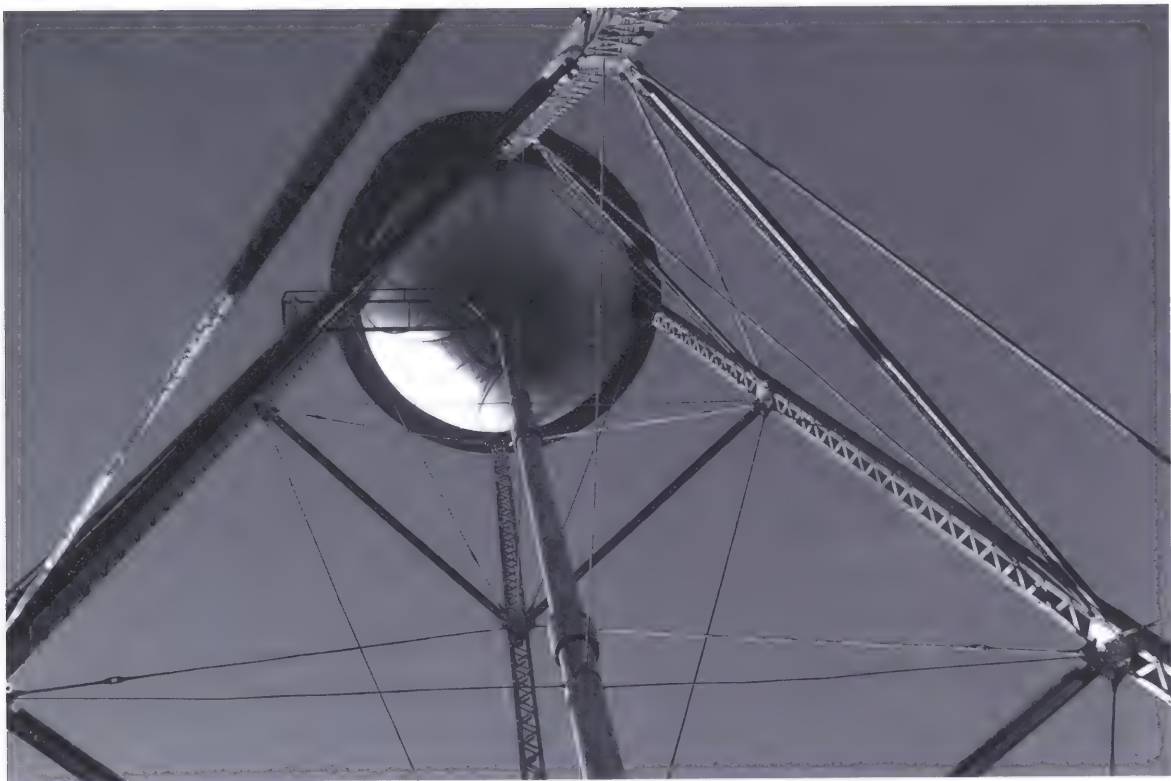
"These days I think I get them mixed up, the first and last time I saw her. She seemed a bit shorter that last time – ten years gone by and the nature of humans being that we shrink over time – and her hair was a bit longer. A bit blonder, too, come to think of it. I guess by then she was going gray, and good old Jean never would have wanted anyone to know, so she kept putting bleach in it and it was a bit more every time she did it. But that first time I saw her was like a number straight out of one of those early color pictures with Ginger Rogers and that Fred Astaire – it was perfect. She was standing in the shade of a forty-year-old beech and she was wearing a pair of her old man's pants, which was probably pretty weird back then, but I thought it was pretty wild and that was the end of my single years. Knew it right then, knew I couldn't leave her if I tried.

"This last time, though, she was a regular Marilyn Monroe and when I walked into the kitchen to see what was cooking it just smelled like bleach. Not red meat burning on the stove

or fish or anything. Bleach. And it kinda gave me goosebumps that it smelled so clean in there, like no one lived there or something, but we had been living in that same brick house since we were married. Creepy sorta. And she said, 'Gary,' and the way she said it I knew it was the end of my married years. I knew it then. She never did say goodbye. Didn't feel like she had to, I guess.

"Even as she walked out the door, I thought, Man, that woman looks like an angel. Sure didn't act like one, though, did she, Jeff? I think she wasn't even trying to hide it after a while, although I also think she thought it was fun at first to keep it from me, outsmart me, pull a fast one on me. She tired of it pretty quick, I imagine, because it was hard for me not to think something was funny when I'd notice some bastard running out of my house every time I'd come home early from the gas station – I hadn't seen you in years because we all needed to stay so far away from that war and it didn't even cross my mind that it may be you running my wife around on me. Even if he wasn't in the house, there was always this run-of-the-mill red truck parked next door and I knew he was in the shed or behind the lilac bushes or something waiting to run off like the sneak I figured this guy was. He looked like such a sloppy jerk in his dirty flannel shirts and mesh cap running for the road. I didn't know who it was for the longest time, and once I ran you off with a broom and then sat on my porch with a cigarette and thought to myself, 'What a jerk.' Thanks to God we didn't have any kids to fight over, huh, Jeff? Thank God.

"Anyway, back to the dream. So, Jean tells me it's going to be a rough ride and I turn my head all the way round – must've been a full 360 – just trying to get a glimpse of my angel. I put the thing on autopilot and run back into the cabin like the Devil's on my heels, but she's nowhere. The inside of the plane is painted with a red stripe all the way around and there is one seat back there, one lonely, empty seat. The



cushion says **CAN BE USED AS A FLotation DEVICE** all over it in big yellow letters and I look out the window even though I don't really want to, don't want to see what's out there for some reason because it makes me sad. Anyway, what's down there is just ocean, and I suddenly want to be fishing for Marlin. We were going to do it on our honeymoon, but it rained and the boat shop closed for the weekend. I was mad about the Marlin, but what I really wanted was to see Jean's hair floating on the breeze like some Helen of Troy and know that she was all mine. Damn that rain; it always came at the worst times.

"Well, then I move towards the door and Jean's whispering in my Goddamn ear, 'Come on, Gary, Let's go fishing,' but we're millions of miles above the ocean and I'm not going to hop out the damned door. But my body's moving forwards like I'm about to jump ship, like I'm gonna just open the door and walk straight out into thin air. I'm sure Jean's pushing me or making me do it and I'm half looking over my shoulder, half screaming at myself like a crazy person. One half's saying, 'I want to go fishing with Jean!' and the other half's shouting back, 'Don't do it Gary, it's not worth it!' This may have been a dream, Jeff, but I ain't stupid, and I sure as hell wasn't gonna jump out of that plane because even in a dream that shit's suicide.

"So, finally, I yell straight at Jean and tell her that I always hated her pancakes, and that flannel boy – I say that, I say 'flannel boy' because I still can't believe it's you – probably don't like them either and she lets off. I sit down in the flotation device and think, I gotta get outta this damn plane. So I walk back to the cockpit and someone's in my seat, but I could give a damn because all I want to do by now is get out of the air and steady myself on solid ground. So I tell the pilot that I'm ready to land, I'm shook up, I'm actually shaking. And the pilot – get this – the pilot is you, the one and only flannel jerk, so I tell you to get off my Goddamn plane. And you,

you fricken' dirtbag, say, 'Can't.' – just like that. So I'm yelling at you now, I'm yelling, 'Why the hell not, you jerk? Get off my damn plane!'

"Something like thirty seconds goes by and they feel like thirty minutes waiting for the bus to come around the corner on a hot and dusty afternoon. I'm hanging around for something, something big. Then you turn and you stare at me, or through me – couldn't tell you which – and in the black peach pit of your eye I can see a reflection, or a prediction: the plane is going down. And suddenly, I am on your side whether I like it or not. We are in it together, like thirty-eight young Americans in those God-forsaken fatigues running across the lines, over barbed wire, through the bloody, muddy terrain and fighting the other side, even if we didn't know which was which. Then I struck a match on the bottom of my boot as the NO SMOKING sign lit up and handed you a cigarette to take a drag, figuring that we were going to die anyway, and that cancer and women and war couldn't hurt us anymore.

"And here's the punch line, Jeff. You don't take your eyes off the sky and those peach pits shine with the orange glow of that same setting sun that we watched fall over the horizon nearly twenty years ago. That cigarette is hanging perfectly between your dry lips like an unfinished sentence and you take a deep breath and inhale all that black tar and tobacco and you say:

"'Till death do us part.'"

"How dare you love someone who thinks it is her duty to write," she perches on the bed, holding his face between her fists, looking intently beyond him, out the open window and the wet, gray world, the small parking lot littered with leaves and potholes, the bare trees, and the scrap-metal mailbox.

The wind is good, she thinks, her eye catching the tattered, fluttering edges of the burlap curtain, her fists trembling at the sides of his face. "You are a crazier fool than the writer. Perhaps because you think it is your duty to love her?"

"Her' being you," he laughs. "Take your fists off my face."

She looks beyond him still, fixedly beyond his steady gaze. She sits as if she could leap. The bed is unmade and wrinkled on one side, remnants of a single sleeping body, with junk piled high on the other side— a frenzied collection of strewn garments and stray pieces of paper scrawled with messy words.

"She rips you open and writes on your entrails, and yet you forgive her," she continues. "She will write for days, and later say she is tired and can never do it again. She will read and reread until she herself cannot understand what she has written. Then they will tell her it is deep. It is complex. 'Oh what it must be like to be in her mind!' They will say. Oh what it must be like..."

"It must be tiresome."

Her eyes clear a little. She looks at the red wall framing her mirror. There are words there, too. Words scribbled in light silver on the red wall. Silver words, probably about reflection.

Pencil, she thinks. Never write words in pencil. Or is it 'always write words in pencil?'

She waits to hear how he is breathing. Still easily. Always steadily.

"If she could she would put them in her mind," she continues, one hand now cupped around the side of his neck, the other on her temple, as if she is only rubbing away a simple

sinus pain. "They would see it is not about them. It is about pride. It has always been about pride. They would then understand all the others like her—the ones who knew this is about pride.

And they would hate them. There would be no more lectures. There would be no more critical essays and Cliff's Notes and footnotes, and all the libraries would be about history— re-written history. And then they would see their mistake: that all along history has been the modern fiction, and what is categorized as 'fiction' has always been the documentary, and the poem has always been the declaration and the creed. They would see that the liars are the researchers and the translators. They would hate themselves for a moment and then regain their footing, correct themselves, and begin discussing the fiction in the history classes. Then they would know the answers. Then they would know what has really happened—over and over it has all happened. But, better, they would know why, and they would know that it will continue... and why. And no more writers would blow their own guts out and no more politicians would be called martyrs. And history would live to tell stories and children would grow to know them. Real stories."

She sips her coffee and watches the light rain. Cleansing rain.

"And the writer will regain her mind. She will remember more, and she will write it all. She will die tired, with an empty mind. But she will be a martyr as the historian will never be again."

She waits for his response.

"You must be hungry."

He never looks worried. Or scared. She could see him the whole time out of the corner of her eye. The boorish curtain danced; her dry hands trembled; he never even flinched— him in his ironed shirt and khaki pants, his leather belt and steady eyes. He knows it is a show. He knows she is working herself up for the sake of the story. She just wants her words to flow with a slighter effort. Maybe he also knows she is testing him.

He just doesn't know that I really mean what I just said, she thinks. He thinks it's creative free-fall. He thinks I didn't say anything with substance, much less merit.

"Boloney," she says. That was a cheap crack. Not even funny.

"You don't like bologna. I'll bring you salami."

Of course he knows I want salami, she thinks. He stands up and reaches to pick a sash from off the floor, a bright green sash with stripes of gold, and places it in an empty drawer.

He laughs. "But your books are always in alphabetical order," he says motioning toward the wall lined in neatly dusted-off shelves, above the mounds of clothes and shoes and notebooks and odd boxes that clutter the floor. He turns to leave.

Method to madness, her mother had always said. There's a method.

She wonders when would be the best time to start to hate him. Don't do this again. She catches herself.

It's that writer's craze. I am just bringing him into my story. He doesn't deserve that.

But she has that feeling already. That feeling that she's already lost him inside of herself. She had already started destroying him for herself— to save herself. If he hadn't known she wanted salami... if he hadn't noticed where the order lay. She had not felt contented with him until then. He was over. She would hate him if he made her love him.

I warned him, she thought.

She could hear him putting away her dishes in the kitchen.

And then she wondered how detectable her warnings were... if maybe he knew that warnings are always pleas. If only there weren't this need for fiction, she thinks. Or if only there weren't that word: fiction.

In the kitchen, he's carefully washing her coffee cups, all the handles broken.

He smiles.

All the handles are broken, he thinks. He



doesn't even wonder why.

If only they knew it were all true, she is still perched. If only they would just look at it. Or in to it.

She doesn't even know. How should they? She doesn't even want it to be true. If they knew it were a fake word, she would only hate them. She would have to because they would know too much. They would destroy her because they would know her pride. Pride and solitude go together. She would have to blow her guts out, too, if they knew. If she didn't, they would be able to touch her. Really touch her. And that she could never let them do. Not even him. Even though he could, even though it might free her, she could not let him. It might make her stop wanting, stop needing. It might make her sit still.

God, she thought, what would I do if I sat still? What would I say? What would I want? If I did not want, what would I write?

"You need to watch your verb tenses," he tells her, returning. He's got the salami sandwich. She notices her leg beginning to ache.

He actually listened that closely, she thinks. I guess I do need to watch them. They never seem important at the time.

"I do it that way on purpose," she tells him. "Tenses are the real myth."

"You're the genius," he grins at her. That word makes her cringe. Genius. No one says that unless it's a joke. Or posthumous.

Genius. Who knows what that is anyway? It's certainly not Christian.

"I am a Christian," She says to him.

"Did you accept Jesus into your heart?" He is mocking her. He's sitting in her chair, on top of her scarves and skirts and a white paper flower, mocking her.

"I'm serious," she says. "I am a Christian."

He moves to sit on her bed. He looks at her as if he pities her. It's that I'm-about-to-tell-you-Santa-is-a-lie look.

"Why do you do this to yourself?" he asks. "You say, 'I am a Christian', and you look at me like you want me to tell you you're not."

It's this state of mind, she thinks. It's not

Christ-like. It's madness. It's deranged. It's raring back to kick him in the teeth the minute he thinks he has me. It's too proud for Christ. She looks at the drawer where she keeps a fancy silver cross, one she can't put on the wall where it goes.

Decoration. A cross as decoration. Commercialized bloodshed.

Paper flowers are just as bad, maybe. I can't twist paper and call it a flower. I only feel okay about it when the color starts to fade.

"Well," he continues in that pitiful lecture tone. It's still like he is telling her that he knows Santa never fed that apple she had sliced into a 3-dimensional star to a reindeer. It took me hours. He saw a picture of it that was taken to show her when she was "old enough." I thought no one but Santa ever saw it. And yet there was that photograph. That charming photograph; that child. And the people smiling at the purity behind it all—the innocence.

Or, rather, exploitation of ignorance.

She focuses herself on his words. She tries to stop imagining him as an enemy to morality.

Cursed gullibility. You never even made a 3-dimensional reindeer-treat, she reminds herself. It's Fiction. Focus on his words. Focus on reality.

"If you keep listening to what that doctrine-obsessed preacher of yours says, you'll keep talking all doubtful like that," he is saying.

"It's not him, and you know it."

"Well, quit this foolish writing thing."

There. He said it. She won't have to hate him. Not right now anyway. Not as long as she can tell herself he doesn't get it. He is just simple-minded. He will sit on a dock watching the sun go down, and she can suck every thought he ever had from him. He can just be a character until it's over. Until it's finished.

As long as he keeps saying things like, "Why don't you just make someone blow their own brains out or get shot through a love letter in the breast pocket. That's how any book gets intellectual or emotional or whatever it is you liberal-minded hippies look for."

As long as he doesn't know that some-

times they have to blow their brains out, or sometimes they just get shot through the breast pocket and a love letter just happens to be there.

As long as he doesn't know, as long as he says those things, she can trust him. As long as he doesn't factor in that she thinks abortion is humanistic and sex-before-marriage a decimation of love and that she voted in the last election for the guy who was sincere over the guy who was a good politician and that the whole time she was abroad she thought about the woods she grew up in and the old men who fish in pontoon boats with saltine crackers and a glass-bottle Coca-Cola in their dented-in coolers. As long as he keeps not seeing her, she can sacrifice for him.

But the truth is, he does know why she tells him defensively that she is a Christian. He does know that during these times, these times when she writes, she is overwhelmed with madness. He knows that she understands the things she utters. He knows that she believes them. It's such a search. And he knows that she secretly hopes he will never reveal the connection he knows they have so that she will never have to hate him... never have to hurt him. Always a search.

It would kill me to hurt him.

He will never let her do it.

Never, he tells himself.

He also knows that if it weren't for these times of madness, times when her room smells of coffee and paper and rain, and the draft through the window is so constant it makes her ill—if it weren't for these times she would always be pretty. She would always be funny and simple. She would always have answers, fundamental answers, and she would always be lighthearted. If she were, he would not need her like he does. He would not value her world as he suffocates between the layers of sleep and awake. Surely he searches, too.

He loves to see her crazy. Sometimes it lasts an hour, sometimes it lasts a month. She will go a whole season without madness, and then it will come. She told him this when they

first met. He has not yet known her for a whole season, but he has seen the air filter through her as if she were five people in one week, and he could only imagine what the seasons must bring.

He can't see the seasons, she thinks. He'll know too much if he sees the seasons.

"I like you crazy," he told her. "You wear it nicely."

And she wanted to believe it. She did. But she knows better. She knows nobody likes crazy and she knows now that the only way to save him in the end will be to lose him and to shed herself by pretending she has never known madness nor written a word of anything but bull-hinged smatter because I must search I must. And it was all a show. And shows must have an ending.

He prolongs the end through slight moments. He plays well, but she knows how stubborn ends are... the end. Always. No one stops them. Not even her. If ends weren't so stubborn, she'd skip them all.

And soon the end was around her ankles and under her skin. She couldn't see. She couldn't sleep. She had tried to skip the end, and it bled her mind. It nearly busted her soul in its claws and she knew if she wanted to reach God ever again, she must give in to the end. It must have its way because she could not have him if she did not have God.

I need God for everything. And a glass dolphin music box plays a Broadway melody in her windowsill. Memory. The season of rain is near the end. The shower is almost over.

She told him. And when he left her little house with the leaves and the scrap metal mailbox and the little battered parking lot, his face was stained with the excrements of everything good they had created and turned to waste.

She heard him agree that it was the end, but she felt him put his hand on her, somewhere on her...

God, why do searches end with ends? She felt like a whole with no pieces for anyone but him, and she wanted to tell him to just keep it there, wherever it was, just keep it there, but his

words had agreed.

She closed the door. She knew enough of ends than to watch them go. You never watch them go.

Before when they were gone, the ends, she would suddenly feel renewed. She would feel the beginning. She would skip and think wind chimes made of seashells and arrowheads made sense, and she would know lightning bugs could spell words at night if the jars were placed just right, and she would draw a picture in the dirt by the creek and sign her life to it saying she could teach and love, and then she would lay in it as if her destiny would absorb it, and she would know she could go and go and go... anywhere she wanted and feel at home...

I'll go to bed, and that beginning will come. She pushed the muddled mess over. I won't even be able to help myself tomorrow morning before I skip out the door to see the world bathed in a Sunday morning glow. The rain is cleansing.

But when the sun came, it woke her in an eerie haze. The world was shrill and white until her eyes adjusted. She wondered how he had wakened, and she felt the chill that comes with waking in skin damp with the hot sweat of nightmares.

But she knew it would come, that rejuvenation. It was there. It had to be. Maybe some coffee and a new curtain. Maybe another sash with every color and a few sparkles, maybe that guy who blows kisses to all the fat girls, maybe a funny movie, a good conversation, maybe this is all too shallow, maybe some Scripture, maybe some dancing, maybe a new trick, a trip, or an herb garden, a muscodine wine recipe, a philanthropy, or a shot or ten of Honk-Eyed Pap's moonshine for God's sake...

"Maybe... a year or two."

But regardless I know the end was right, she thinks, lying on the floor, looking up through the burlap curtain. And it was a long time coming.

"Ends are stubborn," she says to the sky. "There was nothing I could have done."



Auburn, why is your heart breaking?
Because I had a triple-bypass surgery this spring
and I am still recovering from the pain.
They uprooted my best trees
and snapped them like toothpicks,
They broke my cobblestone paths
into peanut-brittle-shaped pieces,
Then they ground my concrete walls into powder
and turned my benches into splinters.



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